

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 IO-14 SAI-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 NIC-01 DRC-01 /136 W

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R 011521Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6222

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 10572

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, GV, VT

SUBJECT: FUTURE OF ARCHBISHOP TCHIDIMBO

REF: CONAKRY 1157

1. VATICN CONFIRMED TO US AUGUST 1 THAT SMALL DELEGATION LED BY PAPAL NUNCIO MARIANI FROM DAKAR HAD BEEN VISITING CONAKRY SINCE LAST WEEK TO DISCUSS FUTURE OF CATHOLIC CHURCH IN GUINEA AND ARCHBISHOP TCHIDIMBO. MARIANI HAS BEEN HANDLING VATICAN'S DELICATE RELATIONS WITH GUINEA RATHER THAN NUNCIO WUSTENBERG FROM ABIDJAN AS IT HAS BEEN FELT THAT WUSTENBERG'S GERMAN NATIONALITY MIGHT BE A HANDICAP. WITH EXPECTATION THAT GUINEA AND FRG WILL SHORTLY RENEW DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, VATICAN EXPECTING TO TURN OVER TO WUSTENBERG AUTHORITY FOR GUINEAN CHURCH, WHICH IS PROPERLY HIS. ONLY COMMUNICATION RECEIVED SO FAR FROM MARIANI

WAS TELEGRAM SAYING HE HAD DISCUSSED ALL OUTSTANDING ISSUES WITH GOG AND THAT REPORT BEING POUCHED.

2. SOUCRE SAID INCARCERATION AND DEFAMATION OF HIS CHARACTER  
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HAS BEEN SERIOUS MORAL BLOW TO TCHIDIMBO WHO IN VERY DEBILITATED

PHYSICAL CONDITION DUE TO PROTEIN DEFICIENCY. FOR THIS REASON VATICAN SERIOUSLY DOUBTS THAT, AT LEAST INITIALLY, TCHIDIMBO WOULD BE IN ANY CONDITION TO ASSUME HEAVY BURDENS OF RUNNING CHURCH IN GUINEA SHOULD HE BE RELEASED. WHEN ASKED WHETHER HOLY SEE WOULD CONTEMPLATE TRANSFERRING TCHIDIMBO TO OTHER POSITION OUTSIDE OF GUINEA, POSSIBLY IN VATICAN HIERARCHY, SOURCE SAID THIS PROBABLY WHAT GOG WOULD INSIST ON, ALTHOUGH IT PRESENTS DIFFICULT CHOICE FOR HOLY SEE SINCE TCHIDIMBO HAS NOT COMMITTED ANY INFRACTION OF CANON LAW WHICH COULD JUSTIFY HIS REMOVAL. STATEMENT IN PARA 5 REFTEL THAT PRESIDENT TOURE STATED THERE NO QUESTION OF RELEASING TCHIDIMBO UNTIL AFTER A NEW ARCHBISHOP IS APPOINTED AND APPROVED BY GOG WAS NEWS TO OUR SOURCE WHO SAID THIS MAY BE ESSENCE OF WHAT MARIANI WILL BE REPORTING.

3 IN ADDITION TO RESOLVING PROBLEM OF TCHIDIMBO'S FUTURE, OTHER CRITICAL ISSUE FACING CHURCH IS VIRTUAL LACK OF CLERGY, THERE BEING ONLY EIGHT PRIESTS IN ENTIRE COUNTRY. TO AGGRAVATE MATTERS, SEVERAL OF THESE EIGHT PRIESTS HAVE NOT DISPLAYED EXEMPLARY MORAL BEHAVIOR, SOURCE ADDED. ALTHOUGH GUINEAN LAITY HAVE BEEN DOING EXCELLENT JOB OF KEEPING CHURCH ALIVE, WITHOUT MORE CLERGY IT WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE TO CONTINUE MEANINGFUL RELIGIOUS LIFE IN COUNTRY. VATICAN IS HOPING MARIANI CAN OBTAIN GOG PERMISSION TO SEND IN FOREIGN PRIESTS, IDEALLY WITH NO RESTRICTION AS TO RACE DUE TO DIFFICULTY IN RECRUITING AFRICAN CLERGY ALTHOUGH, IF IT IS NECESSARY, VATICAN WILLING TO LIMIT ITSELF TO UTILIZING OTHER AFRICANS.

4. VATICAN IS CONVINCED THAT INCREASING POLITICAL ISOLATION, AS WELL AS PRESSING ECONOMIC REQUIREMENTS, COMPELLING GOG TO SEEK RENEWED RELATIONS WITH FRG, FRANCE AND ALSO HOLY SEE. WITHOUT SPECIFYING CHANNEL, SOURCE SAID GOG HAS GOT WORD TO VATICAN OF ITS INTEREST IN NORMALIZING RELATIONS.

5. COMMENT: WE SERIOUSLY DOUBT THAT VATICAN WOULD ENGAGE IN QUID PRO QUO OF NAMING REPLACEMENT FOR TCHIDIMBO IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS RELEASE. WHAT THEY MIGHT DO, NOWEVER, IS AGREE ON BASIS OF HIS APPARENT MEDICAL NEEDS TO BRING TCHIDIMBO TO ROME AND KEEP HIM FOR SOME MONTHS. IF GOG CONTINUED INTRANSIGENT ABOUT TCHIDIMBO'S RETURN, IT NOT EXCLUDABLE THAT VATICAN WOULD FIND HIM PRESTIGIOUS JOB IN ROME AND EVENTUALLY NAME A SUCCESSOR AS  
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ARCHBISHOP OF CONAKRY. TO SOFTEN BLOW, SHOULD THIS BE DONE, AN APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATOR OF ARCHDIOCESE COULD BE NAMED INITIALLY RATHER THAN A FULL ARCHBISHOP. VOLPE

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## Message Attributes

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